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SUBJECT: JAMAICAN PRIME MINISTER VISITS TRINIDAD

REF: (A) POS 488; (B) 05 POS 2064; (C) 04 POS 2042

¶1. SUMMARY: Energy dominated the visit of Jamaican Prime Minister Portia Simpson-Miller to Trinidad April 24-26. Regional crime, drug trafficking and security concerns relating to the 2007 Cricket World Cup also figured in discussions she had with T&T PM Patrick Manning. No new agreements came out of the visit, which was Simpson-Miller's first as PM and came during Manning's stint as CARICOM chairman. End summary.

¶2. Prime Minister Portia Simpson Miller paid a visit to Trinidad & Tobago April 24-26. It was her first official overseas visit since assuming her current office, and responded to an invitation by T&T Prime Minister Patrick Manning, who is the current chairman of CARICOM. The two met in a three-hour discussion, and Simpson-Miller delivered an address to members of the T&T Manufacturers Association (TTMA), and visited the headquarters of the T&T National Gas Company.

¶3. While receiving state honors by the GOTT, Simpson-Miller's visit was overshadowed by the April 24 conviction of T&T Opposition Leader and former PM Basdeo Panday (ref A). As a result, details of her visit were relegated to business pages of Trinidad papers.

PetroCaribe takes center stage

¶4. At a press conference following their April 25 meeting, Manning and Simpson-Miller addressed the PetroCaribe arrangement with Venezuela. Manning reminded the media that T&T had taken a decision to facilitate participation by other CARICOM members, such as Jamaica. By voluntarily giving up Common External Tariff (CET) protection for the regional refining industry, Manning said those countries would be able to take advantage of favorable payment terms for petroleum products from Venezuela. Simpson-Miller said she was bound as PM to do what she could to benefit the people of Jamaica, including participating in PetroCaribe.

¶5. In a remarkable moment of directness, Manning reduced the essence of his government's position on PetroCaribe to a single sound bite. The Guardian quoted Manning, explaining why T&T and Barbados have not signed onto PetroCaribe, succinctly: "The reason is that in T&T we have a refinery ... and in the case of Barbados because they have a processing arrangement with the T&T refinery."

Gas for Jamaica, Aluminum for Trinidad

¶6. Simpson-Miller said during the visit that T&T agreed to a long-term arrangement to supply gas to Jamaica.

In turn, she said, Jamaica agreed to invest in the Alutrint aluminum smelter project proposed for Trinidad (ref B). According to a GOTT statement issued after the press conference, gas supply options for Jamaica include:

- (1) Compressed natural gas,
- (2) Liquefied natural gas (LNG) from Atlantic LNG Train 4, or
- (3) LNG from the yet-to-be-built Train "X."

The supply of gas is supposed to begin in 2009 under MFN payment terms (which would rule out the third option).

17. Econ Chief spoke with MFA CARICOM desk officer Jennifer Marchand on April 27 about the visit. We asked specifically about Simpson-Miller's statement that Jamaica would "invest" in the Alutrint smelter project. Marchand said there were no/no signed deliverables during the visit. The agreements announced, according to her, were verbal ones. Yvonne Gittens-Joseph, T&T High Commissioner-designate to Jamaica, told DCM after the TTMA luncheon that the key issue for the visit was energy. Marchand told us essentially the same thing, though she added that Cricket World Cup 2007 was a significant issue. She elaborated that discussion centered on security concerns for the event, and were similar to those CARICOM officials raised recently with the Secretary in the Bahamas. Marchand said crime and Haiti were not as prominent in the visit. According to her, the recent elections in Haiti boded well for eventually bringing Haiti back into the CARICOM fold. Marchand had little

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say about crime (though Simpson-Miller stated in the press conference that the two countries are working together on the issue through ministries of national security).

18. COMMENT: The visit appears to have had little in real substance. The gas agreement was not much advanced from the MOU signed in 2004 (ref C) and firm details have not been worked out. Manning's statement on lifting the CET for PetroCaribe largely repeated a position he took in January. The visit's greater value (besides enabling post to dust off old cables) may be in building a relationship between the two leaders, who have strong personal religious beliefs, and their nations, which share challenges of dealing with escalating crime, making a success of regional schemes like the CARICOM Single Market (CSM), and managing differences over PetroCaribe.

AUSTIN